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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

A REPLY TO AMÉLIE RIVES.

AMELIE RIVES, in her article "Innocence Versus Ignorance," states that her views on this subject are given in the line of Robert Browning :

"Ignorance is not innocence but sin."

She would be justified in using this authority did she understand the word "ignorance" to mean ignorance of the normal, but, in advocating a "knowledge of good and evil," she assumes that Browning says ignorance of evil is sin, thus placing him in the position of advising a knowledge of the morbid and unhealthy growths on human nature—an interpretation which the author of "Pippa Passes" might have reason to resent.

The article in question even postulates a knowledge of evil as necessary to innocence in saying, "Innocence is only in the highest sense worthy and useful when it is the result of choice." In endowing it with the element of choice, it is to be feared she gives "innocence" the full significance of "Purity," for while purity may weigh and choose, to innocence there is no choice, because no possibility of evil.

The day of the want of confidence between parents and children, so deplored by the author, is disappearing and, when, in order to emphasize what she considers the present unfortunate condition, she uses the question of Milton: "Will there never be a time when every mother shall be the priestess of her children and family?" she overlooks the fact that this expression foreshadowed the present day of the higher education of woman, when the mother becomes capable of priesthood. And, again, she fails to realize that were Confucius living now, and in America, he could not with impunity have made the statement that "There never has been a girl who has learned to bring up a child, that she might afterwards marry."

Still, the wise mother of to-day, however equipped with a knowledge of psychology, goes to school to Nature in rearing a child. She watches the slow growth of the child as reverently as if attending the awakening of a god, and, seeing how gradually Mother Nature unfolds one sense after another, comes to dread any interference which might force the growth of one sense at the expense of others, and withholds the pressure of influences from without, until all senses are equally developed.

This knowledge she learns afterwards to apply in watching the unfolding of the woman-nature, and holds in abeyance even her own individuality, lest she mar a petal of the budding soul. Above all does she dread the approach of a knowledge of evil, and conscious of the sacredness of her trust, guards the maiden's natural faith in human nature, knowing that her defence from evil lies, not in a knowledge of the world, but in a loftiness of ideals.

Again, Amélie Rives includes a knowledge of evil in the knowledge of truth necessary to right living in saying, "As a mere matter of self-defence, such knowledge should be given to children. A mother who keeps it from them acts as foolishly as a hypothetical lioness, who proceeds to tear out her young one's claws, that they may be harmless as doves—not reflecting that, unlike doves, they have no wings to bear them out of the dangers against which their claws would have protected them;" whereas the child's

only real safe-guard is in the growth of spirit wings, which can bear it above danger, rather than in the cultivation of claws, which in purely animal defence injure others, while affording uncertain protection to itself.

In admitting the advisability of instructing a young girl in the wickedness of the world, the author ignores that the rule of pedagogics, which says that an incorrect image of what is to be learned should never be put before a pupil, applies to moral as well as intellectual images. Immorality once revealed, the impression cannot be erased. If immorality be unconceived until a later period its revelation will have a repugnant effect, the force of which would have been lost had the concept become familiar.

But were we to admit the revelation of evil as necessary for the child's self-defence, that very revelation would necessitate a too complete instruction in physical truths, the communication of which to an undeveloped nature would tend to materialize love—a result which should occur only when the nature has reached its highest spiritual possibility.

It is a vital truth that the world of to-day should give more attention to physical morality, yet if, as the result of doing so, thought grows material, both the physical and the spiritual will ultimately suffer. The difficulty lies in drawing that line between physical and mental culture, which shall assure the greatest perfection to both.

"A knowledge of the laws which govern physical nature" is certainly needed, but not until nature herself demands it, and the period of this demand varies according to race conditions. In countries where women attain no intellectual culture, physical laws are fulfilled at an abnormally early period, and the woman flowers and withers before the age of thirty; in countries where the youth of woman is devoted to her education, the development of the intellectual faculties seems to retard emotional growth, delaying the necessity of an acquaintance with physical laws and rendering a comprehension of the *morale* of the world unessential until a maturity of mind yields to the knowledge its proper proportion in a rounded development of the individual.

There survives a dangerous tendency to neglect proper instruction in the laws of the body because of the old prejudice which, in a conscientious mortifying of the flesh, favors the crushing of natural passion, and in condemning rather than exalting its material element loses love's perfect consummation, which while teaching a woman that she is human, renders her more capable of the divine.

But, though in nature's own time the maiden must know the physical and spiritual truths of her being, she need never acquire knowledge of a world where love has lost its spiritual element. When Herbert Spencer said that "Few seem conscious that there is such a thing as physical morality," he did not say that physical morality necessitated a knowledge of physical immorality.

If love in all its spiritual attributes is properly-developed, physical morality is inevitable. If love is once lowered and cynicism fasten its octopus grasp on the young soul, no teaching of physical morality can rescue it. The only preservation of purity is ideality, and the young girl, dreaming of the ideal lover who shall one day waken her lips to life, in keeping herself holy for this consecration, is armor proof against the evils of the world.

In society it is true that "ignorance often causes girls to be placed in a false light," but the very nature of social laws is such that the delicacy of a properly-developed girl keeps her from dangerous indiscretions. A native

modesty is in little danger of miscomprehension, and the mistakes of innocence charm a world which hastens to condemn the suggestions of prudery.

Amélie Rives says of the young woman possessed of worldly knowledge: "Her brothers will confide in her as they never would were she the morally one-sided being instanced as the only type of the refined and innocent maiden." But although the knowledge of the day forces us to cast off mediæval conceptions of woman, does not the fact remain that a sister's innocent horror of evil is a more effective restraint on her brother than a knowledge which would place her on a level with his boyish comrades, and does not the necessity of its concealment from her eyes blacken to him the shadow of the evil? Is it the woman who knows the evil in a man's life who influences him, or the woman who recognizes the ideal towards which he strives?

In urging that any child may develop the evil tendencies which have never appeared in the parent, and should be taught accordingly, the writer quotes from the "Origin of Species," instancing a case of avatism—the occasional appearance of a moss rose on a common rose plant. Herein she establishes the possibility of exception to a general rule, but the fact that a girl of 'horrid tendencies' may come from an unexceptionable family offers no argument for all girls being taught what would be harmful, except to some chance abnormal individual, and had Darwin spoken of the cultivation of the moss rose on the plant of the common rose, would he not have advocated that care of all the buds which would develop the finest specimen?

If, as Sir William Hamilton says, a presentation or representation tends to exclude its opposite from consciousness, the old theory that a young girl be kept ignorant of the wickedness of the world is based on a psychological fact.

BERTHA MONROE RICKOFF.

THE MIGRATIONS OF THE BRAHMAN.

A CERTAIN professor of theology in Tübingen warmly censured the holding of extreme views upon any religious subject. "Some persons," he told his classes, "assert with positiveness that there is a God. Others deny his existence *in toto*. Gentlemen, your safest course will be between these two opinions." In the case of the Hindu philosophy, as variously expounded in this country, we can certainly say, *medio tutissimus ibis*.

There are invasions of ideas as of armies. Those of Eastern philosophy and poetry in the West, though they are but "deeply, darkly understood," have yet had a considerable following among us. The interest of the English-reading public in Oriental thought, whether Buddhist or Brahman, is not indeed a new thing; Sir Charles Wilkins's translation of the Bhagavat-Gita, a portion of the Mahabharata, having been published in London in 1785. It was the first fragment of Hindu philosophy that was adequately presented to English readers.

The Bhagavat-Gita is the typical expression of ancient Hindu ethics and philosophy, and is still the best known in Europe and in America of the Hindu scriptures. It is a work of profound intrinsic interest, which is not lessened whether we read it in the temper of the earlier or of the latest English commentators. Yet not until recent years has any considerable impression been made in England or America by Hindu philosophy, poetry or religion. These have appealed indeed to the thought and sympathy of scholars of both countries from Wilkins and Sir William Jones to Whitney,